31 Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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796 for a period in which offences are to be connived at, as there is bound to be a good deal of drunkenness.

[782] On the conclusion of the preliminary *puja* at about ten a.m., the rice, fowls and rice-beer already collected, are offered to *Maraṅ Buru* and other deities. [793] Thereafter, these are cooked together by the villagers, while the *Naeke* (priest) prepares a separate dish with the heads of the fowls (because he is a pure and chaste person). Now, offering the dishes again to the gods like *Maraṅ Buru*, the *Naeke* leads the community feast and is followed by the tribe.

796 231 Towards evening, the cattle of the tribe are brought to the *Goṭh* and their horns rubbed with oil. They are then let loose near the spot where the tribe has eaten, and the man whose cow chances to eat the *sal*-leaf plate used by the *Naeke* (priest) is considered to be a very lucky one and endowed with the privilege of supplying a pot of *hàṇḍia* (rice-beer) for the next year's festival. He becomes the hero of the tribe, to be blest with good cattle and harvest, and is raised over the head and shown to the assembly. Eggs are also placed on *sal*-leaves; but cows are not made to walk upon them, as we saw in the Santal Parganas.

796 [533] [831] The nocturnal vigil at Mayurbhanj is practically the same as that during the night of *Gohal Puja*, the same songs are sung, but they add many of an [786] [685] erotic nature. But fruits and vegetables as gourds

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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and sweet potatoes must be stolen from the houses of the villagers to be eaten with the Headman's share of rice-beer, and no sin attaches to it as during the *Nòstò Chòndrò* of the Hindus. Such thefts are called *Jagarna* in Mayurbhanj. The object of the custom lies in the Santal belief that those who steal on such occasions will never be prosecuted on charges of theft, nor will such householders thus victimised be robbed by real thieves, a second time.

The second day in Mayurbhanj, is the day for *Sardi*, when *Gohal Puja* takes place. In the morning, an interesting dance is executed round a *Karam* branch which is brought by two bachelor youths and planted on the ground, cleansed with cow-dung by the maidens of the tribe. Old women circle round the tree with earthen lamps and offerings of sun-dried rice. This is closely followed by merry dance by the men and women of the tribe, in different groups.

With the noon, people offer fowls and pigs to *Kalimata*, the presiding deity of the cow-shed and to the ancestors ; and then ceremonially wash their agricultural implements as plough-shares and yokes, and anoint them with powdered rice and vermilion. Now it is time for meal, when, the animals sacrificed are eaten at home ; and this over, by evening, one will find the Santals *en masse* near the *akhra* (the village dancing yard) engaged in their songs and

41 Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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796 241 tied and vermilion with mustard oil painted. Friends come and go visiting one another, all (both male and female) more or less drunk and wild with excitement. [624] After all is over, the young people drink and eat in the house of the *jog-manjhi*.

• [786] The other two days are for nothing but to enjoy life, merry-making going on in full swing with full sex license. For the five days and nights during which the festival lasts the Santals indulge in a veritable saturnalia giving themselves up to dancing, eating, drinking, singing and sexual license. Although this license does not allow adultery, nor does it sanction intercourse between persons of the same sept, yet if the latter offence is committed it is punished less severely than at other times.

796 **Sakrat Festival.** After this another festival known as *Sakrat* takes place on the last day of the month of [179] [226] Pous (December and January). This is an imitation of the Hindu *Pous Sankranti* festival. The Santals (only males) go out fishing to the streamlet a day before the actual festival. From the morning of that day the women are busy preparing cakes of parched rice. [262] The men folk eat curd and parched rice (chura) and go out for hunting in the morning. The cakes are first offered to the ancestors and then eaten. In the after- [526] [624] noon the *Jogmanjhi* collects all the adult males of the village in an adjoining field for archery and other sports. After that in the evening they dance and sing, drink rice beer and spend the day in various kinds of amusements. On the third day they go out to the fair [262] or market (*hat*) after eating a preparation of rice and dal boiled together.

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On the evening before the appointed day the village bailiff delivers the sacrificial hens, two white hens and one brown, to the priest's house. The priest observes his customary abstinence during that night, sleeping on the bare floor. Next morning the bailiff makes a collection of one hen from each house in the village, together with rice, salt and the various spices that are needed to cook a curry. It is the duty of the priest's wife to grind the flour that will be needed for "cakes"; his sister may perform this work only if she is unmarried. In the morning the priest constructs the sacred squares and circles on a piece of ground previously plastered with cowdung. The sacrifices are performed at noon, and these are in some cases offered in the sacred grove, but in some villages they are offered by the side of a stream or on the bank of one of the artificial lakes that abound. The sacred place is made from north to south, as in the case of the Flower festival, and the procedure is the same. First of all rice is sprinkled in the enclosures and some vermilion is placed on the rice. The birds are fed on the rice, water is sprinkled over them, and vermilion is smeared on their heads, their wings and their legs. When the sacrifice is complete, the priest eats the flesh of the heads, while the men of the village feast on a hash made from the rest of the flesh, and drink and sing.

The distinctive feature of the sacrifice is that, before the hens are offered, an egg is placed standing upright on a small pile of rice in one of the squares, and all the herdboys of the village are summoned to bring the cattle. The priest places vermilion on their goad sticks, and they drive their cattle across the enclosure in which the egg is standing until one of the cattle tramples upon and breaks the egg. This is the signal for an outburst of cheering and excitement. The cow or bull is garlanded and anointed with vermilion on its horns and its head. Sometimes the boy is carried shoulder high to the village headman, before whom he makes a deep obeisance, afterwards saluting the other men of the village. When the villagers return to the houses in the late afternoon they are supplied with beer in the priest's house, after which they visit the headman's house for the same purpose, and so on from one house to another. It is at this time that the youths and young women visit the home of the *jogmaajhi* and request him to turn a blind eye to their doings for the duration of the festival. The whole period is characterized by its freedom from traditional morality. The rules of avoidance are treated lightly, and many liberties are taken with members of the opposite sex.

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of the opposite sex. On the first night the young people go through the village conducting the ceremony known as "waking the cattle". There is much drumming and dancing outside each of the cowsheds, and the cattle are feasted and decorated; small white circles made of flour are painted on their hides, vermilion is placed on their horns and heads. When all the cattle in the village have been "wakened", the young men go round once more for the "blessing" of the cattle. They are garlanded and fed with sweetmeats, and the blessing is pronounced as a hope that they will be protected from the dangers of disease and witchcraft, from thieves and the depredations of wild animals during the coming year. This "blessing" is pronounced by the women.

Other ceremonies are performed on the following days. The whole celebration may last either for three or for five days. At one time during the festival the young men of the village lock the bailiff in his home, and he is not allowed to come out until he has promised to treat them all to a drink of beer. During the second day of the festival the sub-clans perform the sacrifices to their *abge* spirits. These sacrifices are also preceded by ceremonial bathing on the part of the members of the households concerned, and the men take to the waterside their hunting implements, bows and arrows, axes and spears. The head of the house officiates, and the sacrificial animals are set apart in the same way as for the village sacrifices, having vermilion in oil placed on their heads, their shoulders and their hoofs. The flesh of the animals is, however, cooked separately from the rice with which it is eaten. On the second day also the cattle are baited. A bull is tied to a post, and the group of men who gather round it begin to infuriate the beast by persistent drumming. One or two of the men at a time, holding before them the skin of a dead animal, engage in mock combat with the bull, leaping at it and inciting it to plunge at them with its horns. The pastime continues for several hours and sometimes results in accidents. It is a happy season for the herdboys; they receive presents of cloth and are well fed by their masters. On the last night of the festival the unmarried men and girls sleep at the house of the *jogmaṇjhi* in token of the fact that their period of licence is at an end.

The remaining festivals of the Santal year do not make the same stir throughout the countryside. *Mokor* is the name used in the area by Santals and non-Santals alike for the festival which takes place in mid-January. In some places it is called